

IN THE CLAIMS:

The status and content of each claim follows.

1. (currently amended) A method of obtaining technical support for a data-processing device, comprising initiating a support session during which device-specific data is conveyed from the device to a support provider system to assist the support provider in responding to a support query, and polling the support provider's system with a polling application to determine whether the support provider has indicated a response to the query has been made available, on a repeated and automated basis, until a response becomes available or the support session is terminated, in which a response flag is added to the support provider's system when a response becomes available and in which the flag is detected by the polling application which notifies a user of the data-processing device that the response has become available.

2. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the ~~polling is effected by a~~ polling application is obtained from the support provider.

3. (original) A method according to claim 2 wherein the polling application, during the support session, is executed subsequent to each boot or start-up sequence of the device.

4. (original) A method according to claim 2 wherein the polling application, during the support session, is stored on or on behalf of the device, in a manner whereby the application is executed subsequent to each boot or start-up sequence of the device.

5. (currently amended) A method according to claim 3 wherein, in a Windows [[O.S.]] operating system environment, a Run key located in or operatively associated with the registry of the device is used to execute the application, subsequent to each said boot or start-up sequence.

6. (original) A method according to claim 5 wherein, upon termination of the support session, the Run key is removed or disabled.

7. (original) A method according to claim 6 wherein the application subsequently is deleted using a delete command executed in accordance with a Run Once key located in or operatively associated with the registry.

8. (original) A method according to claim 2 wherein the support session is established using a web connection and wherein the polling application is downloaded from the support provider using an applet.

9. (original) A method according to claim 8 wherein the applet is operative to download a data harvester to gather the device-specific data.

10. (original) A method according to claim 8 wherein the applet is used only in response to an indication of trust being given by a user of the device.

11. (original) A method according to claim 10 wherein the support provider conveys to the user a trust request, agreement to the request allowing execution of the applet.

12. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the polling is effected using [[HTTP]] hypertext transfer protocol.

13. (currently amended) A method of providing asynchronous web-based active technical support from a support provider to a user of an electronic device during a support session, the method comprising receiving device-specific data to assist the support provider in responding to a support query, dispatching a polling application operative to poll the support provider's system in order to determine whether a response, indicated by a flag associated with the support provider's uniform resource locator, has been made available and notifying the user that the response has become available, the polling application being dispatched, from or on behalf of the support provider, in response to an instruction generated using a trusted applet.

14. (currently amended) A server-side technical support source comprising a web server to participate in asynchronous messaging with a client-side device, the support source being operative to supply, to the device, a polling application whereby repeated polling of the support source ~~may be~~ is effected in order to determine if a response, indicated by a flag associated with the support source, has been provided by the support source and notify a user of the device when the response has been provided, the polling application being supplied to the device using a trusted applet.

15. (currently amended) A software element stored on memory of a data-processing device for use in the provision of technical support to a user of the data-processing device, the software element being, in response to an indication of trust being given by the user,

operative to effect or permit a download of a polling element whereby a support provider ~~may~~ be is polled, on a repeated and automated basis, in order to determine if a response, indicated by a flag associated with the support provider, has been provided and notify the user when the response has been provided.

16. (currently amended) A software element according to claim 15 in the form of an applet, the polling element being transmissible from the support provider using [[HTTP]] hypertext transfer protocol.

17. (currently amended) A software element according to claim 16 wherein the polling element has a data footprint of no more than about 50 [[KB]] kilobytes.

18. (currently amended) A method of obtaining technical support for a data-processing device, comprising:

establishing a support session using a web connection during which device-specific data is conveyed from the device to a support provider to assist the support provider in responding to a support query;

downloading a polling application from the support provider using a trusted applet and polling, using the polling application, the support provider's system for a response to the query, on a repeated and automated basis, in order to determine if a response, indicated by a flag associated with the support provider, has become available or until the support session is terminated.

19. (original) A method according to claim 18 wherein the polling application, during the support session, is executed subsequent to each boot or start-up sequence of the device.

20. (original) A method according to claim 18 wherein the applet is operative to download a data harvester to gather the device-specific data.

21-25. (canceled)